

Mr. Battam's a reproduction of old ideas. He spoke of the *Sèvres* room as showing general magnificence and classical taste. The Glass stall of J. G. Green, of London, was another illustration of a legitimate application of an old taste to modern purposes. With reference to Brontes, the display of these, considering the applicability of the material, he thought remarkably small in the Exhibition, and the general taste trifling. He specially pointed out those by Pons and Messager, those in the Cinquecento style by Villemans, and for general good taste, those by Matifat. The genuine reproductions of the Renaissance by Barbédienne; and the damascened work by Fallot, of Liège, were much to be admired.

The silver-work displayed the three tastes—Classical, Renaissance, and Louis XV. A Vase, or centre-piece, by Wagner, he considered the finest thing there. A tea-service, by Durand, was noticed. The lecturer treated at some length on the specimens in oxidized silver, and showed the advantage of the method for the display of art. The works of Froment, Meurice, Rudolphi, and Gueyton were especially mentioned. The Rococo prevailed too generally in English work. The classical specimens, by George Angel, were very admirable. The fine Cinquecento centre-piece, by Brown (Hunt and Roskell), suffered, he thought, by frosting and burnishing.

In the carvings there were specimens of Renaissance, Cinquecento, and Louis XV. Fourdinois and Barbédienne stood pre-eminent. Riquet-Leprince, Durand, Krieger, Leclerc, and Cordonnier were noticeable. Lechesne's frame, in the Cinquecento style, he considered a very fine work. After some remarks on the Austrian furniture, on the whole complimentary, the lecturer proceeded as follows:—

The objections to English carving imply every want but those of mere mechanical skill and means. There is a want of definite design, and a disregard of utility; there is an overloading of detail, and an inequality of execution, often fatal to the whole effect.

In some instances, where the human figure is mixed up with conventional ornament, the last is perfectly well executed, while the former is absolutely barbarous in conception and in execution. Other specimens found their pretensions solely on profusion of details: others, again, are conspicuous only for their bad style, or their Baroque mixture of styles.

Let us, then, briefly sum up the conclusions that we may draw from this cursory survey that we have just made; and let every designer treasure it in his mind, for in this result he will have presented to him more forcibly than in any other way, the paramount importance of a knowledge of ornament over and above an artistic or manual dexterity.

The exhibition has pretty well proved that the most dexterous of all artists are the French, yet what an inveterate sameness their works must present to the French eye from their so generally adopting the same style in almost every branch of manufacture. A French design not in the ordinary Renaissance is almost a curiosity: we certainly do find French examples of Greek, Gothic, and the now generally discarded Louis XV., but they are the rare exceptions. No skill of execution can ever atone for such execrable mannerism as this. The wide-spread influence of France, in spite of the most debased taste in design, the Rococo, is one curious picture presented to the mind by this assemblage of the world's industry.

Another great fact displayed, perhaps unavoidable where true education is absent, is the very general mistake that quantity of ornament implies quality. In the Oriental works, where quantity of detail is also the chief characteristic, it is of a kind so generally unassuming in its details, and harmonious in its effect and treatment, that the impression of quantity itself is the last that is conveyed, though the whole surface may be covered with ornament.

We find the best specimens of ornamental design, as a class, are of the Renaissance, but the great bulk are of the Louis XIV. varieties: classical art is scarcely represented, and the Gothic is only very partially so. We have,

indeed, only three decided expressions of taste, the classical, the Renaissance, and the Louis XV., for what we have of the Gothic we owe to sentiments distinct from ornament. These three tastes are very distinct: we have in the first, the classical or Greek, a thoroughly well understood detail, with a highly systematic and symmetrical disposition of these details; in the second, in the Renaissance we have also a well understood detail, but a prevalence of the bizarre, and a profusion of parts; great skill of execution, but a bewildering and fantastic effect, upon the whole: in the third, the Louis XV., we have a total disregard of detail, therefore a purely general effect.

And this I believe to be a fair picture of the present general state of ornamental art in Europe, a condition out of which it is the task of the schools of design to extricate it; and if we may judge of the fruits of the French schools, it would appear the especial province of the English schools to perform this service; for the uniform practice of the French seems to show that they are too much absorbed in the execution of details to give any great attention to distinct varieties of ornamental expression.

If a general inferiority in design must be admitted, on the part of England, it is much less in the application than in the taste and execution of the design itself, irrespective of all style. However, in the more magnificent foreign productions, especially those of France, there is a disregard to usefulness, or the general wants and means, which very much detracts from the high credit the execution of the work would otherwise ensure.

It would be no distinctive feature of the age to work well for princes: princely means have secured princely works in all ages; and the Exhibition will do nothing for this age, if it only induce a vast outlay of time and treasure for the extreme few who command vast means. While the efforts of England are devoted, for the most part, to the comfort of the many, France has expended its energies as positively over luxuries for the few: it is an amalgamation of the two that we require,—fitness and elegance combined.

When a costly work, however, is distinguished by exquisite taste, it is something more than a specimen of costliness, and a skilful work will be beautiful, not by virtue but in spite of its materials. Good taste is a positive quality, however acquired, and can impart such quality in perfection to even the rudest materials: it is taste, therefore, that must ever be the producer's most valuable capital, and it is a capital that the English designer and manufacturer may very materially accumulate by a careful inspection of some of the more important foreign contributions in the Exhibition.

I have only, then, to again caution you, that notwithstanding the unrivalled display of magnificence now assembled from all quarters of the world in Hyde-park, the great art of the ornamentist is still only partially represented, as compared with the aggregate of past efforts and achievements; that great styles, individually capable of as much display and variety as the whole of this unique collection together offers, are barely touched upon; that this vast store is at the student's feet, to be gathered into his granary, as the meadows spread their honey before the bee, if he will only extend his search beyond the reach of his hands.

The time has perhaps now gone by, at least in Europe, for the development of any particular or national style; and for this reason it is necessary to distinguish the various tastes that have prevailed throughout past ages, and preserve them as distinct expressions; or otherwise, by using indiscriminately all materials, we should lose all expression, and the very essence of ornament, the conveying of a distinct æsthetic impression on the mind, be wholly destroyed. For if all objects in a room were of the same shape and details, however beautiful these details might be, the want of individuality would be so positive, that the mind would soon be fatigued to utter disgust.

This is, however, exactly what must happen on a large scale, if all our decoration is to

degenerate into a uniform mixture of all elements, or if we allow any one class of elements to engross our exclusive attention; either in the one case or the other, nothing will be beautiful, for nothing will present a new or varied image to the mind.

R. N. WORMUM.

#### WHAT A FOREIGN ARCHITECT THOUGHT OF LONDON.\*

HAVING promised my opinion upon what I have seen in London regarding our profession, I give it without flattery, with sincerity, and if it should appear here or there a little too severe, do not forget that we are still, always and everywhere, in search of perfection without finding it. It is for the first time, as you know, that I have visited London; and the impression produced upon me at entering this great city was stupifying: it was only after several days that I became master of myself, and began to distinguish objects in their veritable forms: now, I have gone through the city and the exposition for nearly two months, and can judge with a clearer head.

The English nation is full of energy: it has both strength of mind and strength of money, two qualities very necessary for the execution of great undertakings, and great buildings; and this is the reason why no other nation in the last century has been able to compete with it in either of them, and also the reason why an exposition for all nations could succeed in England and not elsewhere. But as the envelope of the Exhibition is of the latest construction, let us speak first of some other remarkable edifices, or rather of the architecture of London in general.

The most interesting monuments, as far as regards the history of architecture, are, without doubt, those built between 1050 and 1600. The *Pix-office* (1050), in the *Anglo-Saxon* style; the *White Tower* (1078), style *Anglo-Norman*; and the choir of *St. Bartholomew's Church* (1125), *Semi-Norman-Roman*, bear the same stamp as the monuments of that period on the continent. It is only in the *St. Mary's Church*, in the *Inner Temple*, which was built between 1155 and 1240, that we find the pointed arch and vaulting of the Gothic style; nevertheless, not in the purity of dimensions and forms with which they were produced from 1245 to 1325 in the cathedrals on the banks and in the neighbourhood of the Rhine, and in the Low Countries. The width of the arch is too small in proportion to its height, and the proportions of the columns, with their bands in the middle, as well as the form of the capitals, still show the style *Roman*.

After that epoch, the buildings erected in this capital, from *Westminster Abbey* (1245) to the *Hall of the Middle Temple* (1572), which last may be considered to be rather in the style of the Renaissance (*François premier*) although the windows show the pointed style, are built upon the Gothic principle of the different epochs which have arisen between its birth and its decline. The most remarkable monuments which I have found in this style are the *Dutch Church* in *Austinfriars* (1354), *Westminster Hall* (1395), *Guildhall* (1411), *Crosby Place* (1470), and *Henry VIII's Chapel* (1500). This chapel, one of the most magnificent of its time, is built behind, and attached to, the *Abbey Church of Westminster*, and has a great affinity with the *Gothique-moresque*, which reigned at that epoch on the continent. The ceiling is more interesting as an ornamental than a monumental work, as the pendants are attached by copper rods, their stonework having no relation to the construction of the vaulting.

The choir of the *Abbey Church* and this chapel contain a very remarkable series of Gothic tombs from 1276 to 1532. This collection is the most complete that I have ever seen, and leads to the conviction that Gothic architecture moved in the same path at this

\* It is well-known that foreign architects leave behind them no record of the impressions made upon them by our buildings, that our readers, we have no doubt, will thank us for the following paper. It was written by Herr S. de Jong, an architect of eminence in Holland, who has recently been in England. We give it exactly, leaving the responsibility with the writer.—Ed.